

## THE MIDDLE MAN.

“He that is not with me, is against me.” — MATT. xii. 30.

*Mr. F.* — “From what you have said, Sam, it seems you think yourself a pretty fair kind of a man.”

*Sam.* — “Well, Mr. F——, I will tell you my opinion about that, exactly. I don’t think I ever did much evil; nor can I say that I ever did a great deal of good. I think you may call me *middling Sammy*.”

*F.* — “That is your opinion, then, Sammy? But don’t you think that every thing that exists must have had a cause?”

*Sam.* — “Certainly I do, Mr. F——; for old Sam is not so void of sense as not to both think and know *that*.”

*F.* — “Well, Sam, what do you suppose is the cause of a good man?”

*Sam.* — “God, of course, sir.”

*F.* — “And what do you think is the cause of a bad man?”

*Sam.* — “The devil, most certainly; for God never made any thing bad.”

*F.* — “But, Sam, what is the cause of a *middling* man?”

*Sam.* — “W-e-l-l, I sup-p-o-s-e——”

*F.* — “Ah! Sammy, I perceive you stick fast there. You say God is the cause of a good man, and Satan is the cause of a bad man; but you say that *you* are *neither*! You are *middling*. Doubtless, then, Sammy, you must have had a *cause, too*. But as there is no middle being between God and Satan, and only the two revealed causes of *good* and *evil*, then I am at a loss to know what has been the great moral cause that made you *middling*.”

*Sam.* — “Why, sir, I have heard a great many folks like me saying they were middling; but really, when I

think of the matter in that reasonable way, I begin to be somewhat doubtful whether I should say I was middling. Yet I assure you, sir, I do not think I should be called a bad man."

F. — "Sam, did you ever see a middling gold dollar? Or did you ever see a middling bank-note?"

Sam. — "No, never, Mr. F——; they were always either good or bad. But I have known some bad ones to pass for good ones sometimes."

F. — "Well, Sam, if you never saw middling money, you never saw middling men; and you may rest assured that God's eye is too keen, and his Detector too plain and perfect, to let a bad man pass for a good one; and that a 'middling' man has no existence. So, friend Sam, I want you, when you go home, to think seriously on this matter. 'You can not serve two masters.' At this moment you are either good or bad, and serving either God or Satan. You can not be a middling man. You can have no middling cause, no middling life, no middling death, and no middling *destiny*!"

Reader, as I have said to Sam, so I say to you. You are, at this moment, either *good* or *bad*. You can not be middling. You are either a child of God, or a servant of the wicked one. You are either in the kingdom of light, or in the regions of darkness: the line of separation between those kingdoms forbids neutrality. And, as there is no medium between good and evil, so there is no medium between sin and duty. Therefore what you are doing at this moment is either right or wrong,—a duty or a sin. This statement is both reasonable and scriptural. And, if you consider the whole subject aright, as a legitimate conclusion, you will be brought to say that while you read this you are either fit for heaven or fit for hell. If good, you will go where the good are; if bad, you will go where

the bad are. There is no middling being: therefore there can be no middle place for that which does not exist.

But how can you be good?—that is the great question.

There are only two ways by which you can be good so as to be accepted of God.

One is to satisfy God for all the sins you have committed against him, and afterward to keep his whole law perfectly.

The other is to find a *substitute* to do this in your stead, and one who will make you holy.

Now, by the first of these ways, you know in your heart that for you goodness in the sight of God is impossible. But by the second, the great end can be obtained. For God, not willing that we should perish, has appointed just such a substitute, in the person of his own Son, “that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John iii. 16.) And “he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life;” “and by him all that believe are justified from all things.” (John iii. 36; Acts xiii. 39.) So, if you believe in Christ, reader, you are, at this moment, “*complete in him*,” and “*accepted in him*,” and in him as guiltless before God as if you had never sinned: you are, properly speaking, *a good person by faith in Christ*. Whoever has this faith must have it in the New Testament sense. He must believe that the atonement of Christ is absolutely perfect, and, as such, that it excludes for ever every human work and pious requisite in the sinner. Reader, if you have this faith in Jesus, you believe you are now fully justified and saved for Jesus’ sake, and because Jesus has said so. But if you doubt whether your faith in the blood of Christ hath saved you *now*, what reason have you to believe that it ever will save you? God’s record is, “He that believeth on the Son *hath* everlasting life;”

not, will have at some future time when certain conditions have been fulfilled. If you believe on the Son, and yet do not believe that you have everlasting life, then you dishonor this record, (1 John v. 11;) and *if you do not truly believe in the Father's word, how can you say that you truly believe in his Son's blood?* My beloved friend, this should be the most important subject to you, if you desire to be good and happy now and for ever. You see you can not be *middling*, and there is no possible way of being good, but that which I have endeavored to point out, — and no *goodness*, no *happiness*.

Do you believe that you are accepted and saved in Christ *because you believe in him?* If you do not believe this, your faith is not the faith that the New Testament enjoins. But if you believe this, then rejoice in your present salvation, and let your blessed profiting appear unto all men, — not that your flesh should glory in his presence, but that he may be glorified in you; for “of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” (1 Cor. i. 30.) Blessed be God! if Christ of God is made unto us all this, we are more than middling. *This is every thing!* Every thing that God asks, and every thing that we can desire! And if Christ is made all this unto *you*, reader, you will not only be renewed in the inner man after his image, — not only feel safe and happy, — but, like the good tree, your outward fruit will correspond with your inward nature, and the influence of your wise, righteous, sanctified, and redeemed life will bring from the world around you glory to your Father in heaven.

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